

CITY OF ABERDEEN
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
MINUTES

Wednesday, September 12, 2012

A meeting of the Aberdeen Planning Commission was called to order at 7:00 p.m., September 12, 2012, in the Council Chambers by Chairman Swisher.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Swisher, Commissioners Heavey, Kosko, and Schlottman.

OTHERS PRESENT: Phyllis Grover, Director of Planning & Community Development
Matt Lapinsky, Director of Public Works
Gil Jones, Recording Secretary

The minutes of the July 18, 2012, meeting were approved.

AGENDA ITEM:

1. Review Proposed Text Amendment to the Code of the City of Aberdeen, Chapter 235 – Development Code, for mini-warehouse and warehouse facilities

Mrs. Grover gave an overview of the rationale and history behind this proposed amendment. This effort started in June 2012 as a result of a presentation delivered at the Planning Commission meeting dealing with the last comprehensive re-zoning. At that hearing, a representative from the entity seeking re-zoning for their property on Beards Hill Road indicated a desire to put mini-warehouses on said property, next to a potential apartment complex. They were advised that the zoning sought, B-3, did not allow for such a use. The same presentation was made to the Mayor and City Council and additional discussion took place at that time as well. As this specific use is not addressed in the Code, the Mayor and City Manager felt this should be looked at and tasked Mrs. Grover with drafting an amendment that would speak to this issue. To that end, Mrs. Grover presented said draft to the Planning Commission and asked for their comments. She is looking to have this voted on at the October Planning Commission meeting.

Mrs. Grover indicated she used parts of definitions from other jurisdictions, as this use is not as widely covered as one may think (Bel Air has no definition, Havre de Grace has a partial definition). She indicated the Aberdeen Code allowed these uses in a B-3 district prior to 2006, but this provision was amended out that year. Mrs. Grover asked the members to consider their zoning map and drive around the City to see where these units would be entitled to go if the law is changed, and if those possible locations meet the Planning Commission's vision. She said the Planning Commission could recommend allowing such use in a B-3 district with no restrictions, as a special exception, not allowing it at all, or some other option. Discussion ensued over locations, height, placement, and the nature of other such units in other places. Mrs. Grover cautioned that once the change is in place, it will apply to all B-3 areas.

Mrs. Kosko recommended these be allowed as a special exception in a B-3 district, with conditions. She also feels that additional off-street parking (aside from that for employees) and landscaping requirements should be addressed.

Mrs. Heavey concurred with Mrs. Grover's recommendation to look at the B-3 locations in the City, especially those adjacent to residential areas. She feels these units are not appropriate for B-3 at all, even as a special exception, citing the description of a B-3 district in the Development Code that refers to "services for use by the traveling public." Mrs. Heavey doesn't feel that retail space should be given up in the B-3 and is concerned with the lack of a height restriction in the draft. Discussion ensued over potential and current retail uses, demographics, and developer givebacks and incentives to attract certain retail uses.

Mr. Schlottman said in his experience, the bigger these facilities are, the nicer they are. However, Mr. Schlottman concurred with Mrs. Heavey in that he doesn't want to see this use in B-3 either, that that zone should be reserved for retail.

Mr. Swisher felt that language should be added to the draft that requires each location to have a store that sells storage-related items, such as boxes and locks. Discussion ensued and concerns were expressed over design colors of units in other areas, the use of these units by a business, and operating a business out of the units.

The general consensus was against the idea of allowing such units in a B-3 zoning district.

2. Other Business

Mrs. Kosko's final meeting: As this is Mrs. Kosko's final meeting as a member of the Planning Commission (she is moving to South Carolina), Mr. Swisher, other Planning Commission members, and the City staff thanked her for her service, diligent work, and contributions to the efforts of the Planning Commission. Mrs. Kosko said she has enjoyed every minute of it, but is ready for retirement. Mr. Swisher also noted that Bill Braerman was not re-appointed to the Planning Commission after having served for twenty years. Mr. Swisher indicated Mr. Braerman was disappointed, but understood.

There being no further business or public comment, the meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Planning Commission Chairman

Recording Secretary

Date of Approval